

THE WESTERN FARMER

Opinion of Him Entertained by Leaders of the Anti-Reciprocity Party

In their desperate attempt to delude the Western farmers into voting against reciprocity, in other words, voting against their own interests, anti-reciprocity candidates in the West are declaring that the Conservative party are the real friends of the farmer, and that, although Mr. Borden positively, and even arrogantly, refuses to accede to their demands for reciprocity and lower tariffs, he and his party are their best friends because he promises them other and more minor things they have asked for. And these less important things they seek to magnify as of first importance.

The Western farmer, however, is not at all likely to be deluded. He realizes that reciprocity—not any other item of policy—is the issue NOW. Mr. Borden has forced dissolution on reciprocity and on reciprocity alone. The present election is not a general election in the sense that other elections have been; it is a referendum on the question, "Are you in favor of freer trade relations with the United States?" The fight is on, and it is between the farmer on the one hand and the Big Interests on the other hand. The farmer must win on this big issue NOW if he would have any influence and weight in his demand for other reforms. If the farmer loses on the issue of reciprocity he loses all.

Sam Hughes' Opinion of Grain Growers

But aside from this self-evident fact, is it true that the anti-reciprocity leaders so dearly love the Western farmers? Let them be judged by their

own words. Speaking in the House of Commons on April 11 last, Colonel Sam Hughes, one of the foremost of the anti-reciprocity supporters of Mr. Borden, said (Unrevised Hansard, page 7279):

"Mr. Hughes: This gang of leaders; this Grain Growers' association from the northwest that came down here, the same sort of fellow we find popping up in blacksmith statesmanship.

"Mr. Lancaster: Grit organizers.

"Mr. Hughes: Every one of them a grit organizer and heeler; not the rank and file of the farmers of Canada, but the men who try to push themselves to the front, and whose wives are at home wearing long boots and cleaning out the cow stables and the horse stables, while these fellows are hanging around the blacksmith shop spouting statesmanship for the world over."

Again, at a later period in his speech, the vallant Colonel said (page 7299):

"Speaking of the Association of Grain Growers, I wish to say a word about the leaders of that association. I may be possibly a little too ardent, but I know the gang, and they are the same as those we fought long years ago. I do not believe that one of them is honest at heart. They are today, as they were formerly, in the pay of the Liberal party. It will require more than the declarations of that gang to convince me that they are not in the pay of Jim Hill and the Yankees or of the great Liberal party of this Dominion. At all events their actions are along these lines."

Sproule Lectures Western Farmers.

Mr. Sproule, another of the front bench men of the anti-reciprocity party, expressed his love and admiration for the Western farmer in the following "scold." (Unrevised Hansard, Feb. 21, page 4075):

"We are told that this is going to be a most valuable thing for the farmers of the northwest. The hon. minister of finance said: Look at the large deputation we had down from that country, and what were their wants? One of the great wants was the freedom of the American market in order to enable them to sell their cattle and grain. It may be a very attractive prospect to the western farmer today to get a few cents more a bushel for his grain for a short time, or a few dollars a head more for his cattle, but I say that in doing that he is sowing the wind and is bound to reap the whirlwind. The system of farming—if I may say so, and I think I know something about farming—that they carry on the country today is not the best kind of farming for the progress of the country, or for the future. What is their system of farming today? Having broken up some virgin soil on the prairie, rich, strong and fruitful, they go upon the land in the spring of the year, put in their crop, allow it to remain for a few months, harvest it, thresh it, put their grain into the elevator, and get their elevator receipts. It is all done in a few months in the year, commencing about March or April and ending about the following September or October. What does the farmer do after that? He does a little plowing in the fall, but he has got the full return of a year's labour by working only a few months and that suits him very well, because human nature is always ready, in a few months, to take the wage of a year's work if circumstances will permit. You have the full return of a year's work in a few months when you get your warehouse receipts. Having obtained their warehouse receipts, what do they do? Three or four farmers will employ one man to stay on the homesteads and look after the stock of all of them while these farmers come down to Ontario and go around visiting in the

country until next spring. This is inculcating, not industrious habits, but indolent and unthrifty habits, because these men are away from their farms. When a farmer leaves the farm generally everything is going to the bad. He should be on his farm in winter as well as in summer. He should be going into mixed farming, he should have enough stock to keep the boys employed in the winter time feeding the coarse grains from his own farm that he has in such plentiful supply and return to the soil by that system the nourishment which it needs instead of the system of farming which is carried on now. He is impoverishing that rich virgin soil, with the result that it will yield him less every year. It will bring him to the same condition as that which is found in the States, where they have carried on the same kind of farming until today they are receiving a return of only eight or ten bushels to the acre, whereas it ought to be 25, 30, 35, or 40, as we find it in Ontario today."

Geo. E. Foster on the Western Farmer

Nor will anyone deny that Hon. Geo. E. Foster, minister of finance in the last Conservative government, is today one of the big men of the anti-reciprocity party. And what is his opinion of the Western farmer, and how does he regard their other requests aside from the tariff? Writing in the Canadian Century, one of the Big Interests' organs, of February 4 last, Mr. Foster relieved his feelings in the following:

"Outside of tariff matters the demands formulated were sectional and not national, class and not general." He asks:

"How many of the 400,000 farmers of Canada have any interest in or could derive any benefit from the institution by the state of a system for purchasing, slaughtering and marketing in the form of chilled meat the produce of the cattle growers of the West, or from the expenditure of millions in establishing and operating elevators for the Western grain growers, or in building and operating the Hudson Bay Railway, at an initial expenditure of 20 to 30 million dollars?"

"Contrast the grain grower of the West with the manufacturer," continues Mr. Foster. "The farmer worships wheat, and is its wholesale producer. He found the prairies ready for him, opened up, fit for the plow."

"Did anyone, anywhere, in any age of the world, come into so ready, so inexpensive, and so valuable a heritage? Who provided it? The State. Multiply the acres he possesses at the present day valuation per acre, and you will find that he owns in land capital alone an enormous endowment, running in value from \$4,000 to \$12,000—all this practically a free gift of the State."

"When the grain grower went thither from Older Canada, the United States, Great Britain and elsewhere, he made the journey in comfortable trains, with his family and his belongings. He found transport available to take out to market whatever he raised. He found the telegraph, the telephone, the post office and the mail carrier. Law and order typified by a thousand mounted police patrols provided security for life and property. Who first provided these and now maintains them? The state, in part or in whole. The land he obtained was enriched by no labor of his. It carried the unearned increment of a thousand years, stored up ready for use. It was a bank rich in deposits, a mine stored with wealth."

"All the grain grower had to do was to sow his seed and harvest his crop. Earth, air, and sunshine, all untaxed, did the rest. Through the medium of his crop he has each year drawn upon the deposits in his bank, extracted a portion of the riches from his mine. Has he up to the present or does he now give back anything?"

Foster Regards Western Farmer as a Curse.

"Or is he yearly impoverishing the rich endowment given by the state, depleting its fertility, in reality selling each year a portion of the estate and leading up to the time, not very remote, when he can retire, as much richer himself as the nation is poorer in its real estate and future productive capacity?"

The Western farmer is, in Mr. Foster's view, a leech on the body politic. He takes everything and gives as little as he can. To quote Mr. Foster:

"In the matter of involuntary taxes the grain grower, in proportion to his wealth, returns less to the state revenue than any other class. His expensive machinery bears 17½ per cent., the lowest of customs rates. In comparison with the artisan and the industrial worker he has lower rent charges, lower living expenses, and consumes less dutiable articles."

Solicitude for the Manufacturer.

After having described the Western farmer at length as a man who has had everything done for him, Mr. Foster goes on:

"Now contrast his manufacturing brother. His capital investment is immensely heavier. He pays higher rates on his machinery; it is relatively more extensive and costly; the housing and installation and upkeep are expensive. The state provides him with no storehouse of rich, raw material, as it did the grain grower. For everything he brings out of his factory he has to put in the raw material, and on much of this he pays duty to the state. The waste and shrinkage in process of manufacturing have to be met, and all his processes are wrought out with the accompaniments of constant care, risk, and cost."

Yet these are the men the Western farmer is asked to place his confidence in. He is asked to reject reciprocity because these men are opposed to it and to accept in lieu thereof the promises of these men to give him something else.

Criticizes Western Settlers.

A further idea of the regard of the anti-reciprocity party for the Western farmer is displayed in their newspaper organs and campaign literature circulated in Eastern Canada. The Toronto News, Mr. Borden's chief organ, in explanation of the free trade sentiment in Western Canada, states that it is largely due to rich American settlers who are "not the remarkable asset to Canada that many people think," and to the "sentimental harangue of the

British radical, who is neither, by birth or inclination, a farmer."

One of the Eastern campaign leaflets printed in Montreal, refers to our United States and other settlers as "The dead weight of American and other foreign immigration on our shoulders."

What confidence can the Western farmer place in these men to look after and protect the Western interests? Reciprocity is THE ISSUE. As Sir Wilfrid Laurier said at Simcoe on August 15:

"Reciprocity has become law in the United States, and you can have it tomorrow if the Canadian people will

approve it. I say to you, will you have it or not?"

That is the question the Western farmer will answer by his vote on September 21, and it is the only question upon which he will be giving answer.

The Farmer Will Decide.

Farmers,—Do you want reciprocity, which means freer trade, larger markets, lower freight rates and increased railway competition, and reduced taxation? You must answer by your vote on September 21. A vote for a Liberal candidate will mean "Yes"; a vote for a Borden candidate will mean "No."